

CLASSIFICATION

SECRET

25X1

25X1

REPORT NO.

CD NO.

DATE DISTR. 13 February 1953

NO. OF PAGES 3

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT Consumer Goods

DATE OF INFO.

25X1

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

PLACE
ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

25X1

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECTING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE
LAW, WITHIN THE MEANING OF TITLE 18, SECTION 793
OF THE U.S. CODE, AS AMENDED. ITS TRANSMISSION OR REVEAL-
ING OF ITS CONTENTS TO OR RECEIPT BY AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS
PROHIBITED. THE REPRODUCTION OF THIS FORM IS PROHIBITED.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

25X1

- Most of the clothing stores in Czechoslovakia were nationalized, and although clothing was rationed, it was not always available. Store employees let their friends know ahead of time when they expected clothing in the store. The supply therefore was quickly exhausted and there was none left for those who came late. Factory workers could purchase cheap clothing without too much difficulty and had special ration coupons which were issued to workers and laborers only; the quality of this clothing was poor, and the workers were not much better off than other people. The ordinary citizen could not buy much for his clothing coupons, because they were good only for a certain specified period, during which time the article might not have been available. Twenty ration stamps were needed to buy a shirt. Bed linens were sold for ration coupons, and some people were selling their bed linens through newspaper advertisements because they needed the money. Most people in Czechoslovakia were resewing or patching their old clothes for further wear.

2. Wearing apparel was extremely expensive on the free market. A shirt cost 400 to 700 crowns, a handkerchief 48 or 60 crowns, a meter of cloth for making a dress or suit seven to eight thousand crowns, (tailors charged 1,700 crowns for making the dress or suit) a pair of shoes 450 to 750 crowns, a pair of socks 65 to 76 crowns, and a necktie 100 crowns.

3. There was a considerable shortage of fabric goods on the free market, and the quality available was very poor. [redacted] material for a man's suit in a private store in Novy Jicin (4936N-1801N). The cost of the material was extremely high, three m. costing seven to eight thousand crowns. The best textile goods were available through the Darex cooperative, where items could be bought for either dollars or pounds (sic). In the Winter of 1951-52, a small bolt of silk appeared in another private store in Novy Jicin and was all sold immediately.

.25X1

25X1

CLASSIFICATION

SECRET

RETURN TO RECORDS CENTER
IMMEDIATELY AFTER
JAN 54-322

23

[illegible]

SECRET/ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 25X1

-2-

4. Wool, including knitting wool, was virtually unobtainable. Those people who could raise their own Angora rabbits for wool sent their furs to plants for treating and tanning, where the State confiscated about half of the wool. The owner of the fur got the other half back, not too clean. Wool was sold on the black market at four to five thousand crowns per kg.
5. Textile goods were not of good quality. Tails of the shirts were shortened considerably in order to save fabric, buttons were of poor quality, workmanship was poor, and the shirt came to pieces after a short while.
6. Womens' raincoats were made from a transparent material of cellulose and silicate oxide. When the temperature dropped, this material tended to crack and tear. There was a great shortage of these coats, also. In buying one of them, a person had to turn in the old coat so that there would be "basic raw materials for new products". Housewives' aprons were also made from the same material as the raincoats, except that they were green. Nothing hot could be placed on or against these aprons because the material would disintegrate. In early 1952, this material was very expensive, costing 300 crowns per square meter. [REDACTED] artificial silk and wool were being produced in Czechoslovakia, [REDACTED] In the town of Napajedla /4910N-1732E/, in Moravia, there is a plant called "Fatra", where a product called "igelit" was made into such items as childrens' trousers. [REDACTED]
7. Leather goods were high on the open market, and the choice was very limited. In early 1952, one could see more and somewhat better briefcases, billfolds, shopping bags, womens' handbags, and gloves on the free market. But there was a constant campaign on to conserve leather. Stores were offering more and more shoes for sale with rubber heels and soles.
8. The amount of food available on ration coupons usually lasted about 14 days. After that, people were forced to buy on the extremely expensive free market. An average man with a family who earned 3,500 or 4,500 crowns per month could not afford to buy a kg of lard on the free market for 450 crowns, 10 dekagrams of salami for 28-35 crowns, 25 dekagrams of coffee for 250 crowns, a bottle of wine for 220-270 crowns, a can of sardines for 180 crowns, 1/2 kg of butter for 112 crowns, or one liter of milk for eight crowns. Most of the above items were rationed. This means that the shops only received a certain amount, and when that was gone, there was no more.
9. The monthly ration of eggs per person was four eggs. All hens were supposed to be officially reported and registered. The authorities assigned quotas to the farmers, prescribing the number of eggs that had to be turned in at the end of the year. One egg cost 10 crowns on the free market. As a result, many people raised hens without reporting them, so as to have more eggs for their own use and for helping out their relatives and friends. The daily ration of poor grade milk was 1/8 of a liter per person.
10. Large landowners were not entitled to food ration tickets. In the Fall of 1951, it was officially announced that even owners of small plots of land would no longer be entitled to food ration tickets. [REDACTED] A person who did not work got no food ration coupons. Ration coupons amounting to one kg of meat sold for one hundred crowns on the black market.

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

-3-

11. One often heard the remark that things were better under Hitler, meaning that things were rationed then, too, but that the items were almost always available. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] bread was hard to get times. If oranges appeared in a store during the winter, they were sold out within a half hour. During the Winter of 1951-52, the largest grocery store in Opava received two crates of oranges. [redacted] 25X1

25X1 [redacted] several women stating to the store proprietor that they had several children, that made no difference. One can often see housewives queued up in front of shops, waiting for goods in the early hours of the morning.

12. During the last half of 1951 there was a serious shortage of meat and fat products in Czechoslovakia. The situation was really quite desperate, and the government in Prague had to try to do something about it. Long articles appeared in the newspapers about what the government intended doing in order to remedy the situation. Bombastic statements were made about how the number of hogs, suck pigs, and beef cattle was going to be increased. The people just laughed at these statements. No goods showed up at the local markets. There was widespread talk that two things were happening: Czech goods, mainly canned and preserved goods, huge quantities being stored for use during a war emergency, and many of the goods were being shipped to the Soviet Union.
13. Private construction was at a standstill because of the strict controls on building materials. During the Winter of 1951-52 briquettes, coal, and coke were hard to get. [redacted] got small rations of brown coal, which was very poor fuel. The talk was that the trade agreement on coal with Western Germany had not been worked out. 25X1

14. There was almost no gold in Czechoslovakia. Whenever anyone wanted to buy a piece of gold jewelry, he first had to turn in enough gold to equal the weight of the item that he wanted to purchase. On the black market, gold sold for 600 crowns per gram. People short of money were often forced to sell their personal heirlooms in order to live. In February 1952 a living room suite cost 50 thousand crowns. The US dollar had a value of more than 500 crowns on the black market. People bought goods in the Dax cooperative for the dollars they obtained on the black market.

15. Radios and watches were repaired in any way possible. The people obtained parts any way they could, mostly "under the counter", because regular repair shops sometimes stripped the radio of its good parts and replaced them with defective ones.

16.

25X1

[redacted] red gasoline was intended only for use in trucks.

17. The general economic situation, of course, had a great effect on the morale of the people of Czechoslovakia. [redacted] the people were becoming dissatisfied and had even started criticizing openly the unfavorable economic conditions. [redacted] this general unfavorable attitude reached its peak in the Fall of 1951. 25X1

SECRET